

**Whatcom County Local Planning Area
2006 WorkFirst Local Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) Plan**

The Whatcom County Local Planning Area partnership has designed the following plan to meet the following primary objectives of the Comprehensive Evaluation:

- Better information about parents' skills and abilities and quicker placement in an employment pathway.
- Increased parent involvement in developing their plan for participation, resulting in more parent 'buy-in' and better results.
- More consistency in how the program operates across the state through stronger program standards.
- More objective decision making based on clearer program criteria.

1. Please list the local DSHS, ESD and CTC agency partners that will be participating in the CE process in your local area (i.e. specific CSO, WorkSource site, and CTC(s)).

DSHS: Bellingham CSO

ESD: WorkFirst co-located at Bellingham CSO

CTC: Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College

2. Describe how child care and needed support services will be handled at the time of application (Positive Prevention Services) to help ensure that parents can participate in the CE process without delay.

Bellingham CSO conducts *Same Day Service* for TANF applicants. In the initial application (usually the first day of contact with the agency) WorkFirst Program Specialists will offer parents positive prevention services. These services focus on linking families to other services that can meet their needs. These services include Child Support, Basic Food, Medical Assistance, Unemployment Benefits, Diversion Cash Assistance, Child Care and Same Day Self-Directed Job Search in the Evergreen Center Resource Room.

As part of the prevention services, TANF applicants will be screened through TAXIS/GUIDE for potential UI eligibility initially and if appropriate, required to file for UI via telephone or internet (resources are available on-site for this) and bring a determination of eligibility back to the DSHS worker. This process will take place at the same time as the TANF application process and will be followed up on during the comprehensive evaluation. The parents' child care and transportation needs are addressed in the first day of contact, and fast-track WCCC applications are initiated, so that issues can be resolved before a referral is made to the comprehensive evaluation.

If a family's situation cannot be resolved without the aid of the TANF program the WorkFirst Program Specialists will authorize TANF and initiate the Foundation Evaluation. Referrals to CE and to Working Connections Child Care are not delayed pending final eligibility determination if the parent is willing and able to participate in CE while providing required eligibility documentation.

3. Describe where each of the CE elements – listed above and in the standards – will be conducted (e.g. CSO, WorkSource, college, other).

All of the CE elements will be conducted at the Bellingham CSO.

4. Describe how each element of the CE will be conducted (e.g. individual interview, group process, group or individual testing).

DSHS: CE Foundation evaluation and Social Services Assessment

(CSD staff will use the CE foundation evaluation and Social Services Assessment in eJAS – these do not need to be listed)

CTC: Education Assessment

CASAS score interpretation will be delivered to the group. A form has been designed to give the individual scores to parents. Scores are explained to the group of parents using an enlarged poster of the CASAS score guidelines. Basic skills, IBEST, CJST, and HWHD are explained.

Educational opportunities will be delivered to the group. BTC, WCC, and NWIC have developed a single flyer identifying the educational opportunities available at all three schools. A brief description of the training programs is given, then the parents are asked for questions.

An individual interview is held with each parent to identify education achievements, training interests, and potential barriers to completing a training program. An interview form has been developed to provide consistency in the interviews.

While parents are waiting for their individual interview, they will complete a computerized vision and auditory screening for learning ability problems, unless there is no indication that there are any learning problems (ie, those with college degrees, recent high school graduates with good GPA's and no history of educational/learning problems, etc., will be exempted from this LD screening). The screening provides an immediate description of any learning/cognitive problems a parent may be experiencing and a proposed plan to help the parent resolve learning ability issues.

ESD: Work Skills Assessment

Work History: Parents will provide information about the specific employers, dates, wages, and duties of their work experience. Parents will be asked to include reasons why previous employment ended and identify any employment-related issues that are related to a parent being able to get and keep employment.

Work Needs: evaluate conditions that affect the type of work a parent could seek and accept to include physical condition, felonies, child care and transportation.

Job Skills: Parents will list specific skills they possess related to work, such as machines operated, aptitudes and abilities such as organization, customer service, cash handling, etc. that translate to job duties.

Work Interests: Using Choices CT parents will evaluate their interests in terms of the types of jobs they prefer.

Work Values: using Choices CT parents will identify values regarding working conditions, working with data, working with people, working alone, etc.

Local Labor Market Information: Evaluation of the current labor market, which employers are currently hire people with the skills the parent possesses, what kind of training the parent might need to move into jobs they are interested in, whether there are current job orders that the parent qualifies for, the wages the parent might expect to earn, and any other relevant

information related to the employers in Whatcom County. Included will be information regarding drug testing and other requirements employers operate under.

ESD Employment Plan: At the conclusion of the Work Skills Assessment, parents and their WorkFirst Job Specialist will write Steps to Employment plans incorporating the information from the Comprehensive Evaluation. The client will then attend a prescheduled meeting with their WorkFirst Program Specialist or Social Worker to write the IRP to Pathway, usually on the day following completion of their Employment Plan.

5. Describe how your local CE process will meet the completion time frame standards (an average of 10 work days to complete CE and no more than 30 calendar days from TANF application to participation in a pathway activity).

- *Include when or how often each element of the CE will be conducted to ensure that adequate evaluation opportunities are available to meet parents' needs and the program standards.*

DSHS: TANF applications are taken daily and the Foundation Evaluation is conducted the same day as eligibility interview (same day as application when applications are made face to face.)

CTC: CASAS testing will be scheduled twice each week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The education assessment will be scheduled once each week on Thursdays following CASAS.

ESD: Work Skills Assessment will be scheduled twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

In most cases, parents receive same day service; the IRP for CE activities will be written the same day parents apply for benefits, including setting the date for the follow-up IRP after CE. Typical flow through the rest of the CE starting every Friday is as follows:

- 1) Dependable Strengths, 2) CASAS, 3) Educational Evaluation (with LD screening), 4) Hidden Rules for Success at Work and 5) Work Skills Assessment and Employment Plan.

Dependable Strengths and the Hidden Rules alternate every other week, starting on Fridays. CASAS and Work Skill Assessment and Employment Plans are offered more than once per week to allow for make-up sessions within the 10-day timeframe and to accommodate customers' pre-scheduled appointments (court, medical, etc), though the primary days for the typical flow will be Thursdays for each.

At the completion of the Work Skills Assessment and Employment Plan, the parent will attend the prescheduled meeting with their case manager to write the IRP to Pathway.

- *Explain how the social service assessment, when required, will be completed within the above timeframe.*

Social Services will have an assigned "worker of the day" who will reserve appointment slots for required assessments as part of TANF Same Day Service. The social worker would then write the IRP referring to CE, including setting a follow-up appointment for the pathway IRP with a social worker or WorkFirst Program Specialist as needed.

- *When program criteria for emergent issues indicate the parent needs be “temporarily deferred” from completion of the CE, describe how your area will insure that parents are re-involved in CE as soon as possible.*

The assigned social worker will complete the assessment and set a short term plan to address the key issue(s) preventing CE participation. This plan will require staffing with the Social Services Supervisor when it includes a deferral time longer than two weeks.

6. Does your local intend to include “enhancements” to the CE process beyond the required minimum standards (i.e. Family Literacy, soft skills, Dependable Strengths)? If yes, please describe your plans.

Dependable Strengths, Hidden Rules for Success and Vision/Auditory screening will enhance the CE process. Dependable Strengths course provides parents with opportunity to identify specific skills that apply to employment, with concrete examples to demonstrate they have these skills. This process helps parents clarify what types of jobs they are best suited for. Hidden Rules for Success, based on Dr. Ruby Payne’s economic culture research, teaches parents the hidden rules of middle class which helps them be more successful in the workplace. Vision/Auditory screening will identify learning ability problems and provide an educational plan to help improve learning abilities. This educational plan would be bundled with other WorkFirst activities.

7. Describe how line staff will communicate and coordinate during the CE process.

With all activities delivered at the CSO, line staff will have immediate access to each other. Communication will take place face-to-face, through telephone and email conversations. Case staffings will be scheduled as needed for parents with difficult situations to resolve. When available, all partners will additionally use Ejas. The Whatcom County LPA has developed a solid working relationship. All partners currently cooperate and coordinate activities around what’s best for the parent.

**Whatcom LPA
Comprehensive Evaluation Plan
April 2006**

Whatcom LPA partners approve and support this local plan for implementing the Comprehensive Evaluation process for WorkFirst.

Greta Lent, Regional Administrator, Region 3 Community Services Division /Date

Sheila Brillson, Area Director, WDA 3 Employment Security Department /Date

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Ronnie-Sue Johnson, Administrator, Bellingham Community Services Office

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